

Preparing North Carolina's Workforce for Today and Tomorrow

NCWorks Commission 2019-2021 Strategic Plan

VISION

To build a job-ready workforce to strengthen North Carolina companies, attract new businesses, and ensure our state can adapt to a changing economy.

MISSION

To ensure North Carolina has an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system that develops adaptable, work-ready, skilled talent to meet the current and future needs of workers and businesses to achieve and sustain economic prosperity;

and to ensure North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow by increasing access to education and skills training, fostering employer leadership to prepare workers, and supporting and scaling local innovation.

CHARGE

The NCWorks Commission develops policies and strategies which value diversity and enable the state's workforce to compete in the current and future global economy. The commission leads, builds partnerships, forms alliances, and is accountable for strengthening North Carolina's innovative, inclusive, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system.

Goal 1 – Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy by increasing skills and education attainment. Education is the foundation to a strong workforce. As the skill requirements of jobs increase and change rapidly, businesses need to find people with the right skills for the jobs they create, and North Carolinians need access to training so they can be ready for those jobs.

- **Increase career awareness.** Every North Carolinian needs access to career information that will lead them to jobs that are growing in their area and which training programs can prepare them for those jobs. Career information includes individual experiences with employers and access to data and career exploration tools.
- **Advocate for increased educational attainment.** Enhance programs to raise the high school graduation rate and improve the technical curriculums offered in an effort to increase the number of North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree, credential, or certificate to address the education attainment gap in North Carolina and make progress toward the goal of *MyFutureNC* that by 2030, 2 million North Carolinians between the ages of 25 and 44 years old have a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential.
- **Promote access to job training for high-demand fields.** Too many employers have job openings that remain unfilled because of a lack of workers with the right skills. It should be easier for workers to get training in those fields and keep our employers growing.
- **Increase access to education for those that have barriers.** The cost of school is more than tuition. Supporting North Carolinians including those with disabilities and other barriers to employment who need help with things like childcare, accessible transportation and the cost of books and materials while they get trained for a new career is critical.

Goal 2 – Create a workforce system that is responsive to the needs of the economy by fostering employer leadership. Employer-led job training programs have the best career outcomes. Employers know best what skills their workers need, and employer involvement is key for workforce development and job readiness. Businesses that invest in developing North Carolina’s workforce will benefit from well-trained employees and a more innovative and diverse workplace that better reflects its community.

- **Support efforts to increase work-based learning opportunities.** With increased employer engagement, expose students to career opportunities through career awareness and career exploration. Work-based learning also includes internships and apprenticeships where students experience real-world professional environments.
- **Enhance programs to enable employers to provide training for new and existing employees.** Successfully upskilling workers will enable employers to promote from within and bring in new employees to fill the vacancies. This will help to develop a job-ready North Carolina.
- **Develop and implement industry-led partnerships.** As market dynamics shift quickly, North Carolina needs to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of businesses. The 23 North Carolina local workforce development boards are in a unique position to lead business engagement strategies in their local communities. Diversity among partner agencies is important, and all agencies, business entities and associations engaged in economic and workforce development will collaborate to fully understand business needs and efficiently deliver the right services to address those needs through sector strategy models.

Goal 3 – Promote replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation. Communities across North Carolina are developing great local models of workforce development. North Carolina should build on those successes and replicate them in more places to continue building and expanding innovative solutions.

- **Advance leadership development opportunities to workforce professionals.** Local education and workforce partnerships drive successful career readiness initiatives. Investing in these local leaders will increase the capacity of their programs and help them better their communities.
- **Provide funds to innovate and replicate good ideas.** Local leaders know their communities best, and they deserve support in piloting new ideas designed for their areas. When those innovations are successful, other communities throughout the state should hear about the success and have the tools and funds necessary to replicate proven programs.

Goal 4 – Promote System Access, Alignment, Integration, and Modernization. North Carolina’s workforce system includes multiple agencies, programs, and funders. Collaboration, policy alignment, systemic

communication, integration, and modernization of the workforce system will ensure a strong and healthy workforce system that can adapt to a changing economy.

- **Continue to strengthen system integration.** Better coordination and communication among North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, North Carolina Community College System, University of North Carolina System, North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the 23 Local Workforce Development Boards, North Carolina Department of Commerce and North Carolina Department of Administration and community-based organizations will promote a more integrated workforce development system.
- **Support better awareness, communication, accessibility, and understanding of the “NCWorks” brand.** Demonstrating and sharing what “NCWorks” can do for individuals and businesses can help create a recognizable identity and brand to all customers that access the career center system to increase awareness. Making the system user-friendly, accessible and navigable is crucial.
- **Research advanced technology for marketing to adapt to new generations entering the workforce.** As users of the system continue to evolve, so too should the way they interact and use the system. Keeping up with the changing skill demands and needs for customers will ensure that our workforce system remains nimble and adaptive.
- **Measure and report on the effectiveness of the workforce development system including the usage and quality of services.** Collecting, understanding, and using data effectively is critical in guiding a successful workforce development system.